(b) what efforts the public sector oil marketing companies are making to increase the percentage of population covered;

(c) what is the impact of Government's advice to public secto- oil marketing companies to concentrate their expansion plan in semi-uroan and rural areas;

(d) whether it is a fact that a large number of persons are in the waiting list for LPG connections in Rajasthan;

(e) if so, the number of persons on the waiting list for LPG connections as on date and since how long; and

(f) by when the list is likely to be cleared?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) As on 1.7.2006, Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) were operating 440 LPG distributorships in the State of Rajasthan. Through these distributorships, OMCs are serving about 36.89 lakh LPG customers covering 39.82% population in Rajasthan.

(b) and (c) OMCs supply domestic LPG through their distribution network and have the freedom to set up LPG distributorships at viable locations as per their commercial considerations. The setting up of LPG distributorships is a continuous process and involves identifying a suitable location, arranging land for setting up of godown and other statutory clearances. In view of this, it is not possible to indicate any specific time frame for setting up of new LPG distributorships. Government has advised OMCs to concentrate their future expansion plans in semi-urban and rural areas in the country.

As on 1.7.2006. OMCs had set up 1105 and 1190 distributorships in rural and urban-rural areas respectively in the country. OMCs have taken steps such as introducing 5 kg cylinders and setting up community kitchens to enhance the use of LPG in uncovered areas. OMCs have also finalized a common industry marketing plan covering 791 locations for setting up LPG distributorships mainly in rural and urban-rural (semi-urban) locations.

(d)to (f) As on 1.7.2006, there was no waiting list for LPG connections in Rajasthan.

Introduction of Smart Cards

816. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have finally decided to introduce Smart Cards for kitchen fuels in the country;

(b) if so, the amount for use of fuel to be taken by the families below poverty line/above poverty line, on issue of kerosene oil/cooking gas monthly/annually; and

(c) how the families shall be benefited as a result of issuance of Smart Card and when it is expected to be initiated?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHAJ. PATEL): (a) to (c) Government is considering a proposal for introduction of Smart Card for distribution of PDS Kerosene on an experimental basis with a view to better targeting the-subsidy for intended beneficiaries.

No final decision has been taken as yet.

Promotion of Ethanol—Blended Petrol

817. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a plan has been formulated to extend the ethanol—blended petrol, presently operational in 10 States, to every part of the country, and the mixture will also have a large ethanol content of 10 per cent from the current 5 per cent;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the present status of its implementation;

(c) the details of steps taken for removal of reported restrictions, in the form of high rates of taxes, by some States on the supply of ethanol for blending with petrol; and

(d) the level (s) of ethanol—petrol blending being practiced in some other countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) to (b) The Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas (MoP&NG) had introduced the scheme of mandatorily supplying 5% ethanol blended petrol in major sugar producing States and contiguous Union Territories w.e.f. 1.1.2003. However, the programme could be implemented only in a staggered manner because ethanol was not available in a consistent manner and at reasonable prices. MoP&NG issued an amending Notification dated 27.10.2004 making sale of EBP mandatory in 10 States and 3 UTs if the price of sourcing indigenous ethanol for supply of ethanol-blended petrol is comparable to the price of indigenous ethanol for alternative uses, the delivery price of ethanol at the locations is comparable to the import parity price of petrol at that location, and the indigenous ethanol industry